



EXODUS, PART 28

THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A COVENANT

Exodus 19:1-8

We began our study of the actual Exodus last October 14. It is now January 27. What has taken us about 3 ½ months to cover – including interruptions for special days when the sermon topic varied – has actually only covered a period of two months for the nation of Israel.

As we begin our study of Chapter 19, Israel is now in their seventh week of travel since they left Egypt on the night of the Passover. Much has happened in that time, and there is so much more to come.

Chapter 19 is a preamble – the preliminary events leading up to what might be labeled as the Constitution of God – the Ten Commandments of Exodus 20. God has led His people out of the slavery of Egypt, has delivered them from thirst, starvation, and the dangers of the wilderness travel, and has soundly defeated their enemies.

Now we come to one of the most important periods in history – not just in the history of Israel, but in the history of the world. The Law of God is intended for all nations – for all people groups – not just to a tribe of wandering Jews in the deserts of the Sinai Peninsula.

As the nation prepares to encamp, God called Moses up on the mountain to give him the message he would deliver to the people in preparation for the coming days.

At this point, it is important to note that God has literally fulfilled His promise to Moses on this very mountain where the angel of the Lord appeared to Moses in the midst of flames that did not consume.



It was there that God reminded Moses of God's call on his life and explained His calling included Moses' return to Egypt to lead the people of God out of bondage and slavery.

When Moses doubted his ability to carry out such a tremendous mission as the deliverance of Israel from the hand of Pharaoh, God promised Moses in...

Ex. 3:12 I will be with you, and this shall be the sign for you, that I have sent you: when you have brought the people out of Egypt, you shall serve God on this mountain.

Now, as Moses once again stands on this very mountain, God gives him further instructions in...

Ex. 19:3 "Thus you shall say to the house of Jacob, and tell the people of Israel..."

I. Reminder

There are two important references in the first part of God's instructions to Moses: "the house of Jacob" and "the people of Israel."

These references serve as a reminder to the people of what God has accomplished in these His chosen people over the last 400+ years, and even more so in the last six weeks.

Originally, they were nothing but a relatively insignificant family of about 70 people who moved into Egypt to escape famine. Over time, they became slaves to the Egyptians. Now, they are a nation of priests, called by God, led by God, provisioned by God, protected by God.

On their way to freedom, the people of Israel experienced the revolution of sorts by their passage through the Red Sea. Just think of the symbolism of that name and of that experience.



Nearly 240 years ago, the founding fathers of these United States “brought forth on this continent a new nation, conceived in liberty, and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal.”

Their decision and their courage announce to all men everywhere and of every nation that all men have the right to be free of tyranny and oppression by other men.

But this liberty did not come cheaply. It was only secured by the sacrifice of men’s blood – a “red sea,” if you will, that washed away the threat of tyranny from these shores and brought about the birth of political freedom

We who know Christ as Lord have also experienced the birth of freedom – a revolution of our souls. The blood of the purchase of freedom was not our own, but came from the body of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, who liberated us from the tyranny of sin offering himself as a sacrifice.

Just as the nation of Israel passed through the Red Sea on dry ground from the bondage of slavery to freedom, we, too, have been granted the gracious privilege of passing from the bondage of slavery to sin into the freedom found in Christ purchased by the shed blood of Christ.

The journey for Israel has not been pleasant nor easy, and the people have not been thankful for all that God has done. All along the way they have voiced their grievances about the hardships of the journey. They have murmured and complained, yet what they never realized was that, as hard as the journey could have been, it could have been much harder.

God told Moses to remind the people of “how I bore you on eagles’ wings and brought you to myself.” The journey may have seemed difficult, but imagine what it would have been had I not carried you all along the way.



In His grace and mercy and love for His own, God has carried them as a mother would her newborn child, allowing them to lean upon His everlasting arms until He has brought them to this place and into His presence.

You may wonder why your life has been so challenging so far. After all, you are a child of God. Shouldn’t things have gotten easier instead of harder as you went along?

But God reminds us that all of the difficulties that we might go through in our walk with Him are as soaring aloft in the heavens on the wings of eagles compared to what life would have been like without Him as Lord.

Deut. 32.9-12a (NLT) The people of Israel belong to the LORD; Jacob is his special possession. He found them in a desert land, in an empty, howling wasteland. He surrounded them and watched over them; he guarded them as he would guard his own eyes. Like an eagle that rouses her chicks and hovers over her young, so he spread his wings to take them up and carried them safely on his pinions. The LORD alone guided them.

Isaiah 40:31 They that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint.

II. Requirements

God then makes very clear the simple, two-part stipulation that will ensure their enjoyment of the blessing of God to all time: if you will indeed obey my voice and keep my covenant,

First of all, the people have to be willing to hear the voice of God. Secondly, upon hearing the word of God, they must surrender themselves to perform it.



Up to this point, God has done everything for the people on the basis of grace, but from this day forward, God's blessing on the nation would be contingent on their obedience to His commandments.

It is important to note here that it is not their standing as God's chosen people that is at risk through disobedience. It is not God's grace that is contingent on their obedience, but His blessing.

Remember the words of Samuel to King Saul after Saul's failure to obey the command of God:

1 Sam. 15:22 *Has the LORD as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to listen than the fat of rams.*

Remember Jesus' pledge to the Father recorded in...

Heb. 10:5 *When Christ came into the world, he said, "Sacrifices and offerings you have not desired, but a body have you prepared for me; 6 in burnt offerings and sin offerings you have taken no pleasure. 7 Then I said, 'Behold, I have come to do your will, O God, as it is written of me in the scroll of the book.'"*

Jesus said to the scribes and Pharisees in **Matt. 9:13**, *"Go and learn what this means, 'I desire mercy, and not sacrifice.'"*

III. Rewards

Then follows three blessings that God will bestow on these, His chosen people beginning in verse 5:

Read v. 5-6

- **my treasured possession** among all peoples, for all the earth is mine;



Barnes: "a costly possession acquired with exertion, and carefully guarded."

Certainly God has gone to great lengths and used miraculous methods to bring these His chosen people into His presence.

The phrase "all the earth is mine" is a reminder to the Jews as well as to every other nation that the God of Israel is not a "mere national Deity," but in fact is the ruler of all mankind.

- **a kingdom of priests**

Notice that at this time, there was no distinction between the people and priests – no such thing as laity and clergy. Every person was called to be a priest – to represent the people of the earth to God and to proclaim His truths to all people groups, even to the ends of the earth.

- **a holy nation**

Distinct and set apart from all other nations for God's purpose and His glory – always a Jew before anything else.

We who know Christ as Lord are to be Christians before anything else. Before we are Americans, we are Christians. Before we are parents, we are Christians. Before we are teachers, or business people, or secretaries, or anything else, we are Christians first.

God has included the church under this same umbrella of blessings that He promised to Israel. The Apostle Peter explained how these promises God originally gave to Israel are shared by us because of the grace of God in Jesus Christ:

1 Pet. 2:5 *You yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual*



sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ... 9 You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.

What God promised to Abraham may be equally applied to the church today: I will bless you so that you may be a blessing to other people.

Thus was the message that God delivered to Moses that first day on Mt. Sinai. He instructed Moses to preach the same message to the people of Israel, which Moses did.

There was a holy convocation of the people and elders, joined in unity to hear the word of God.

And upon hearing it, they responded in...

Ex. 19:8 "All that the LORD has spoken we will do."

Of course, time and history have proven that the words the people spoke of commitment to the will and the purpose of God were hollow sounds without any substance or meaning.

Just as they had done during the period of grace, they would continue under the Law to complain, to murmur, to rebel, to disobey until eventually God had to put them back under the pressures of captivity to eliminate the idolatry that would come to dominate the nation.

